BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: WALLACE S. AMIOKA, retired Shell Oil Company executive

Wallace S. Amioka, Japanese, was born in Kakaako, June 28, 1914. His mother was born on Kauai, went to Japan at age nine, and later returned to Hawaii as a picture bride. Wallace's father was born in Hiroshima, Japan.

Wallace was educated at Pohukaina Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and McKinley High Schools. He also attended Japanese Language School and Japanese cultural activities including sumo matches, picnics, and movies. While in high school, he was active in "youth" clubs and sports. Later, he was also involved in Kakaako community politics.

He started to work for Shell Oil Company in 1931 and has served in various positions including clerk, supervisor, accountant, office manager, and financial services manager.

His hobbies are golf and orchids. He currently has his own insurance business.

TIME LINE

1914	birth: Kakaako
1928	graduated from Washington Intermediate
1931	graduated from McKinley High School; started with Shell Oil Corporation
1942	married
1977	retired from Shell Oil Corporation

Tape No. 3-20-1-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Wallace Amioka (WA)

Ala Moana Building, Oahu, Hawaii

January 16, 1978

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is an interview with Mr. Wallace Amioka on Janaury 16, 1978 at his office in the Ala Moana Building. Mr. Amioka could you tell me a little about your parents?

WA: Yes. My parents, well, my father was born in Japan. Yeah, Hiroshima Prefecture and came to Hawaii as a very young man. I really don't know when. But for many years, of course, we had lived in Kakaako. My father was a fisherman at the time I was born. My mother was born in Kauai--Eleele, Kauai, in 1890--but, went back to Japan with her parents when she was about nine years old, and then subsequently, returned to Hawaii as a picture bride to my father. Well, I was born in Kakaako on June 28, 1914.

PN: Do you remember who your friends were at that time?

WA: Oh, yes.

PN: Your close friends?

WA: Well, we grow up in Kakaako, went to the Pohukaina School there, in elementary grade. But we were close-knit community, you might say, and I had many friends, primarily, of course, through athletic club. Some of my friends who are still living is Mack Yanagisawa, Robert M. Sato. Well, if you find the younger ones who are much younger than us... 'course the president of the university, Fujio Matsuda, also from Kakaako--he's the contemporary of my brother, Shiro. Teizo, or Ted Kurano, who retired from the City and County of Honolulu. Generally, I guess, off hand to name them at random is pretty hard. Sally Saiki, who recently retired from the City and County. Masaru Naito, he also retired from the City and County. There were others, of course, like District Judge Frank Takao. There's also District Judge Kenneth Harada. They all, more less, you might say, contemporary of mine, although they are much younger than I am.

PN: This area, you said you were born on South Street?

WA: Yeah, and I was born on South Street.

PN: Who were your neighbors like that?

WA: Oh, well, the neighbors was, I'd say we're all neighbors. You know, you might say everybody was neighbors in Kakaako. It's a small community. At that time, well, like I say Mackey Yanagisawa was a very close neighbor of mine. Yono Kitagawa, all that group, was all neighbors.

PN: You folks played sports together?

WA: Yeah, primarily as I say, well, of course,we went to school together, ever since Pohukaina, later to Washington Intermediate and, of course, on to McKinley High School. This is the way most of us who grew up at that time--go to Pohukaina, and then Washington Intermediate was formed in 1928. 'Course we were all assigned to over there for the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. Then on to McKinley High from the 10th grade on. Primarily as I say, our close association is formed through clubs, like, first, Pioneer Club. Maybe the Hi-Y, connected with the YMCA. And of course, we had our own Kakaako YMA, Young Man's Association. We sponsored softball as well as football teams, primarily. And by playing barefoot football, 'course we get close association on the field of sport. You know, you really get to know person.

PN: Did you join the club first of all, and then get involved in sports?

WA: Well, yeah, it's sort of almost automatic. You know, you grow up in an area where you're close neighbors, and you always, almost automatically feel you a part of the club. And then, you play, of course, when you belong to the club, because the teams are sponsored by the club.

PN: Could you explain a little bit more about this Pioneer Club.

WA: Well Pioneer Club is a club that is sponsored by the YMCA. For younger students, maybe go through the elementary through junior high school. But when you go to high school you join the Hi-Y's. Later on as I recall, they form Hi-Y, Young Man's Club, which were I think, post high school group, you know. They had some groups of Young Man's Club.

PN: Who was the advisor or leader of the...

WA: Oh, the Pioneer Club? Well, the Pioneer days, I recall, being advised by John Kometani, who's now Dr. John Kometani, an M.D., as well as his older brother, Katsumi. He's a dentist, Dr. Katsumi Kometani. Our early advisors. And several other people, of course, subsequently advised us, but I don't recall any names.

PN: Did you folks have regular meetings?

WA: Oh, yeah. Pioneer Club used to meet, I think, once a week, as I recall. We would meet at night, you know, in the evenings.

PN: And the club itself was what? What was the purpose of the club?

WA: Well, it's like any 'Y' club. You know,get the boys together and you learn various things. Hard to say specifically what. But, it's more a club to keep us off the streets, you know, I'd say.

PN: The members were, what nationalities?

WA: Oh, all kinds. Everybody's eligible, but predominantly Japanese-American, actually, cause the community itself predominantly that.

PN: How big was this club?

WA: The club was maybe 20, 25 boys. This is sort of a voluntary thing, you know. You don't pay dues, or anything like that. All those who wanna associate would go to the 'Y' and play basketball, swim, and things like that. It's part of the, you know, part of the club functions.

PN: What 'Y' was this?

WA: Nuuanu YMCA.

PN: You folks go there regularly to have your meetings?

WA: Well, no, no. We would usually meet in our area, you know, maybe the Japanese language classrooms. But, we were entitled to go on the weekends. Of course, the YMCA also sponsored leagues, as you know. They'd have a volleyball league, or baseball league, or basketball, you know. And as far as swimming, they have organized classes. This would be our weekend function, you might say, when we are not doing anything else.

PN: Lot of these memebers, I guess you could say, played sports, barefoot football, like that?

WA: Yeah, well, in Kakaako YMA, as I say, was really a district club, Kakaako. Naturally, anyone could join. But, we would sponsor barefoot football; first, 120-pound league was our predominant emphasis at that time because we were small. You know, most Japanese kids are not heavy. So, we would play football and that was was City-wide league, sponsored by the City and County Recreation Department. And we'd play that, but we also would participate in softball league, which were also sponsored by the City-wide League, you know, City Department of Recreation. Later on as we grew older, we would we sponsored regular baseball, you might say, Senior Japanese Baseball, which what is now the AJA League. We had a Kakaako team in that league. It's a district team as you know--Moiliili, Palama, Kakaako, Kalihi--they now have Sheridan, I understand; now they have Nuuanu. It's still going on as a district team. We would sponsor, in other words, we'd finance the team. We'd raise funds by benefit shows, and so forth. We, who are working now, we are sort of backers of the team.

PN: So, you belonged to the Pioneer Club first of all, then the YMA?

WA: Well, no. It's sort of simultaneous.

PN: Could you explain more about the YMA?

WA: Well, as I say, it's a district club organized by us. Our advisor, of course, was Uichi Kanayama, who was a school teacher. We would raise funds for anything; we'd raise funds out of the community by sponsoring benefit movies at the temple, or school ground. It's just, all of us got together and formed the club.

PN: What kind of movies was this?

WA: Oh, these Japanese movies usually. Those were the days when you have only silent Japanese movies, you know. You going back about 40 years now, 45 years. Almost, well, half a century. And it was very popular those days. The silent Japanese movies would have what we call a benshi. He's a fellow that would provide the dialogue. And the movie, you'd hire, these guys to come and put on the show. And in the meantime, we would sell, we wouldn't sell tickets, we would just sell space. Zashiki, they call that. It's 3 feet by 3 feet space, and that's what they buy, you know. But then, they would contribute on their own, the people who come.

PN: Benshi would do what?

WA: The dialogue. He provide the sound. It silent. Okay?

PN: Oh, the movies you mean.

WA: That's right. The club itself is not a formal thing, you might say. We didn't pay dues or anything. It's a natural association- people with similar interests--primarily in this case, sports. And the backer, even those who didn't partcipate, you know, you always have backers who would come, boosters, you might say. Well, they would be members of the club, too, and help raise funds for the team. You know, equipment. You need equipment, and all those things. It would be raised by these benefits. We'd raise our money ourselves in that way, both for football and baseball.

PN: So, the money you made from the fund raisers would go towards...?

WA: Just to sponsor, spending on what we need.

PN: Was the money used for other things, like social events?

WA: No. We wouldn't have; very seldom we have anything like that. If we did, we'd be on a dutch treat basis.

PN: So, most of the money went towards...

WA: Practically, all the money went to participating in sports.

PN: What kind of other fund raisers did you folks have?

WA: Well, primarily that.

PN: How often would you folks...

WA: Oh, probably about once a year. Sure, we make enough money. And, we'd ask for donations if we didn't have, you know. Some of the stores would support the uniform, maybe, you know, ask them to participate. Or several stores would come in and help us buy the uniforms. That kind of thing. You put the name (of the store) on the back.

PN: How did you first get involved with the barefoot football? Did they have a tryout?

WA: No, no, no. Yeah, well, yeah. Yeah, just a call comes out. Those who want to come out, come practice. And you go out and you practice until you selected. In fact, practically everybody played. Those who wanted to play had the chance on the team, because you didn't have that many, you know, participants. There wouldn't be a case where they say, "Oh, we can't use you."

WA: He'd be a "sub" (substitute), he may never play, but, you know, at least if he'd be able to practice, eh? Dummy scrimmages, so forth. You need the bodies. So, any kid who wanted to participate, no one was barred. And, it wasn't a racial thing, too, now. Anybody who wanted to. We had Chinese, Japanese Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian kids, who wanted to come out and play for us. But those, you know, Hawaiian and Portuguese kids were much bigger, so usually they would in another team. We had another team called Kakaako Sons. But, they participated in the heavier league called the Senior League at that time, which was also a district. They had Kakaako, Kalihi, Palama, Pawaa. But, they would play at the stadium. That too, I understand, was sponsored by the City and County. You go by the weight. You got a 120-pound, we had a 135-pound, then we had a Barrel League which were no weight limit, you might say, those over 150-pounds and beyond. Plus the Senior Football League, they were the good players. If you can get into the Senior League you were quite a good athlete.

PN: So, you played on what team?

WA: I played on what we call ourselves, Atkinson. Atkinson because of the Atkinson playground where we practiced. It was located near the incinerator. Where it is now, you know, there's an incinerator. It's there in Kakaako. That's where we practiced. So, we call ourselves the Atkinson team. So, I played for the Atkinson, 120-pound. Even the softball team we would call Atkinson.

PN: You know, before you turned out for the team, did you watch barefoot football?

WA: Oh,as kids, we all watch football, naturally. And all the sports. That's a natural thing. Going follow the leader, you know, you follow the older kids. And before you know it you old enough, and you already are participating. Almost natural outgrowth of your daily activities, you

might say. To us, it's sort of a growing up process.

PN: So, you joined the team because a lot of your friends were playing also?

WA: No, it's a natural thing to do. Well, there's a playground there; you go there, right? There's a team formed. Before you know, you are involved in the team, with the team. One form or other. Those who didn't play became equipment managers. You know, even mascots.

WA: This is what we don't have today, this natural affinity of a community group. Mostly people are scattered all over the lot today. You don't have the type of residential area as we once had.

PN: Who were your coaches on this barefoot league?

WA: Well, as I say, Uichi Kanayama was our head coach.

PN: But you folks had also line coaches?

WA: Oh, yeah. But I don't remember. The line coaches and the assistants were usually people who played, you know, the bigger leagues. They older, and they would come and help. We would practice on the same field, you know. You know, we'd be practicing, and we would even scrimmage against them. We'd have contact scrimmage, and things like that, even though they were heavier, you know, we'd scrimmage them.

PN: How often would you folks practice?

WA: Oh, everyday. During the season we practice from what 4 to 6:30 p.m., everyday, Monday through Friday. On Saturday, we probably lay off because we have a game on Sunday morning.

PN: And games were usually played in the mornings?

WA: Yeah, usually in the mornings, Sunday, at different playgrounds.

PN: So, you would be going to intermediate school at that time?

WA: No, no. I'd be going to high school at that time. By that time I really played, you know, 120-pound league, I would be in high school, and even after high school. After we began working, many of us played right through, at least, four or five years. 'Cause we practice after work, you see.

PN: But, when you were going to school, you would come home from McKinley High School, and then, go to Japanese School?

WA: I go to Japanese language school. My Japanese language school was at first, Kakaako at the Kakaako Japanese Language School. But, I went

only to the sixth grade. Then, after that, I went to Nuuanu. The school used to be located near Nuuanu and Vineyard, called Chuo Gakuen. And we subsequently moved way up near the cemetery there, up in Nuuanu Cemetery. So, I'd walk from home to McKinley, or intermediate, as the case may be earlier. And then I'd walk all the way up to Nuuanu, everyday, and back. Japanese language school, you have Saturday morning classes. So, I'd go up Saturday morning. All the way up, and come back home. We'd walk, or might stop off at Nuuanu YMCA. You know, on the way, and fool around for awhile, and come home.

PN: Come home and practice?

WA: Well, yeah. 'Course we'd come home and practice, yeah, if it's football or baseball season.

PN: Practice would be from 4 to 6:30 ?

WA: Well, I would say anywhere from 4 o' clock till about 6 to 6:30. We'd go home take a shower, and 'course, there used to be a nice, little corner on Cooke and Pohukaina Street, there was a corner where they had a store there called, Tamura Store. And, "Ants" Tamura, although he did not play, was a good backer of the team. And he had a truck, okay, which was our means of transportation to go to various sports events and, well, then we'd usually gather there in the evening for, you know, for about an hour or so. And, we had a Hawaiian boy who was a very good ukelele player, Bill Kakalia. Bill Kakalia is a classmate of mine at McKinley. And he'd come with his ukelele and he'd strum the uke, and we'd be singing, and so forth. 'Cause, you know, don't forget, those days there was curfew. And then 8 o' clock,the siren would blow and we suppose to go back home. You know, disperse. Sometimes, of course, we'd be sticking around, and we get chased by the cops, you know. (Laughs)

(PN laughs)

WA: Run home, but, this was the rare occasion. Then we'd all walk up, Alapai, as we called it. But it's off King Street, King and Cooke Street. There used to be stores there. One of the stores was the ice cream parlor. And, Raleigh's Ice Cream, we'd call it. And we'd go up there, and have some ice cream, walk back home. Another thing we did as a kid, as I recall, which was a lot of fun, we'd go up and hike up Punchbowl. We'd go up the slope, you know, and play cowboy and Indians. And the Punchbowl was not a cemetery then. There's a lot of cactus and so forth. Some guy would get the idea, let's go, and then, we'd all go up. Maybe 30 or 40 of us sometimes.

Walk straight up Punchbowl, fool around there, and eat panini, if we'd get hungry. They were nice cactus, yeah. And then, we'd walk home. 'Course other times, of course, we'd go swimming. And swim along the channel there. In fact, when I stop playing football or baseball, a lot of us, we stop playing that, and we used to run to the Kewalo Basin, and

jump off the pier, and swim up the channel there. Up there near where Ilikai is. We'd swim around and, you know, swim back. Maybe about four miles swim, yeah. This was done in the early evening. We have a while gang of about 20, 25 of us. Jump off the pier, and off we go. This is done after work, you know.

PN: So, then you were working already?

WA: Yeah, oh yeah. After we stop active participation in contact sports, like football or even, well, baseball, of course, we play quite (a lot of) years. You know, we have Makule League, and that kind of thing. So, we would play, but football, you know, would be little too much for us as we got older. So, we'd just used to participate in this swimming. It's a natural thing, not organized. You know, a couple of guys start going. Pretty soon, everybody notice we're running with our trunks on, and we say, "Hey, come on, let's go." And, you know, 'course it's a block, eh. We living in a very close proximity to each other. And before you know it, everybody else getting in the mood. Many times we'd get 25, 30 kids with us, go swimming. And a guy get tired, you know, he just get off the beach and rest awhile. Eh? You know, up that channel, Ala Moana channel. That was open at that time, from Kewalo Basin. Now, it's closed. You can't do that.

PN: So, most of your early years were spent playing football, or in baseball?

WA: Well, as far as athletics are concerned. Yeah, of course. 'Course we gotta go to school too, you know.

PN: Going back to your playing football like that, was there a lot of injuries?

WA: Oh, well, not too many injuries. Not serious injuries, although we did have one very serious one. Our quarterback, we'd call him Kubo. Aoki was his last name. Yeah, he died. Yeah, he got tackled on one of those games, as I recall. We were playing at Makiki, I recall the park. I was a running guard, so, I was leading the interference. And, I vividly remember the play, because I told "cut," you know, cut in but instead he went "out." And naturally when he went out, three or four of them tackle, and he had the football, and I guess went in-between on the ground, and he had a rupture, I understand. He died from ruptured liver, or something like that. That was the only real bad tragedy we had. Well, you get your usual, you know, bumps and bruises. No broken bones, or anything like that. You know, sprains, and torn ligaments, that's sort of, almost, you expect those things in football, you know. Even baseball, when you sliding, you could sprain yourself. But, you know, those we call pretty minor stuff when you consider the type of contact sports we participated in. Outside from that, no, we did not, luckily we did not have any major injuries where people would have to be hospitalized.

PN: What kind of strategy, or plays did you folks have? Was it mainly a running game?

WA: Our coach, Uichi really stressed fundamentals. So, you know, we had what do you call it, the T-quarterback was very popular in those days. T-formation, come from Notre Dame, you know? And we would shift sometimes, like the Notre Dame football. But, we'd also have what they do now. You know, the quarterback under the ball, and pass the ball. No, we emphasize a pretty balance football. Was pretty conservative compared to today. We didn't play the wide-open game that you notice today. And pretty much fundamental football where you have power plays off-tackle. Occasionally and around, you know, and run passes when the situation looks like it's nice to pass. But, you be surprised how punting, the punt was a very much integral part of the attack in those days. Well,we had barefoot kickers that kick, 60, 50 yards very easily, you know. Yeah, they kick the ball 50, 60 yards in the air. And, you find that was part of the weapon, you might say. Punt the ball.

PN: Was there a lot of people who turn out and watch the games?

WA: Oh, you mean barefoot football? Oh, sure. There'd be, I would say, no stand right? Playgrounds. They'd line on both sides of the field, and then the end zones. Well, you can't figure how many, but I wouldn't be surprised if we always had about 2,000, maybe 2,500 fans turn out. But, of course, the championship games, we would be playing the stadium. 'Course there you have to pay admission. But, still, though we would draw three, four thousand people.

PN: Was there a lot of supporters from Kakaako?

WA: Oh, yeah. Every district would have it's supporters. Whenever your team played, the districts all would turn out. The people, parents, friends, you name it. And plus regular spectators, and lot of people who like to watch barefoot football. Because it's fast, you know. It's very fast sport. And, it's very popular.

PN: Was there any fights between players?

WA: Oh, hell, oh sure. That's to be expected. (Laughs)

(PN laughs)

WA: You get pretty heated up, you know. Unfortunate, sometimes there'd be fight between the supporters, after the game. Yeah. I remember some real, real honeys. I remember one time in McKinley High School ground, we were playing, and we weren't playing. It was a bigger, you know, maybe 135-pound league. Oh, that was a real, real fun. I mean fun in the sense that everybody participated in the free-for-all. That kind, nobody really gets hurt, you know. But, the cops had to come, I know, and break it up. And usually you find they don't make any arrests. You know, they break it up, and everybody shake hand and go home practically. Yeah, that was part of the rivalry, you might say.

No, we've had our share of gang fights, naturally. Fight with Kalihi gang, and Kakaako gang. The Pawaa gang, you might say, got into some sort of a misunderstanding. And before you know it, there'd be 30, 40 guys, you know. It's sort of--seems funny in a way, after you thought about it, you know.

You know, and say, "What you fight about?" (Laughs) He ask, "What was that all about?" "I don't know. Somebody started it. We just jump in, that's all."

PN: This is mainly sports (related)?

WA: Usually, yeah, it's out of aftermath of a sport. But, the teams as a rule did not get involved. I think we had pretty good rivalry, but keen, strong rivalry. In fact, most of my friends today from another area on outgrowth of my having played football or baseball. Or, you know having been associated with sports over the years, because subsequent to my doing all this, I helped coached the Farrington High School team with Henry Kusunoki, who happend to be a classmate of mine. 'Course, the reason why I got drawn in, when Uichi Kanayama was a vice-principal of the school at that time, and he was instrumental in asking me to help Henry, knowing that I was his classmate. I coached the line, I concentrated on the guards and the tackles. And Henry was a center at the university so he would work with the center. Bert Itoga, who was also one of the coaches, and also instructor there, coached the ends. And we had Sol Kaulukukui, you know, helping us coach the blackfield.

So, I worked Farrington, I would say, from about, I don't even know. Maybe about 1941, 1942, 1943. Right before I went into the Army. So, during the war years, I used to leave my work early. I work for Shell Oil. Started there in 1931. So, I take part of my vacation time. So, 2:30 in the afternoon, I'd be at Farrington High School and charge it to my vacation. So, I had about three years--three seasons--helping the Farrington High School team. So, of course, now you know lot of the kids have grown up. Occasionally while walking you hear someone say, "Hi, coach." You turn around, there's this guy 6 feet 2 inches, you know. Big as can be, you know, looking at you and say remember who he is. And, oh, we had good team those days.

PN: You said, lot of the people you know are friends from rival teams?

WA: Oh, yeah. Sure.

PN: Did you folks have a lot of contact? I mean, you know, like did you folks play together?

WA: Well, you'd have a lot of contact because most of those people, most of the kids that played football would also be playing softball. Okay? So, almost a continuous thing. The only time we'd probably would not have much of a contact would be, maybe a couple of months of the year.

You know? You'd be playing football, say from about what? August through maybe end of December. And then, pretty soon, you know, in January, softball season would start till about April or May. You know? And then, before you know it you gotta begin all over again. So, the contact is almost continuous from the playing field, or otherwise. Oh, yeah, occasionally you'd know them at work too, you know. Your business work. You would contact them.

PN: Would you folks get together after a game, or something?

WA: Nah, nah. Usually not. After the game they did go home, when we go home. But, occasionally, yeah, I guess they may have a dance, for instance. Dances were very popular those days, sponsored by schools or various clubs. Palama Settlement used to be---regularly, they had dancing every Saturday evening---as I recall, sponsored by one club, or the other. And, this is another fund raiser too, you know. And, ah, admission was cheap. Maybe 50 cents. But, still, those days, 50 cents is nothing to sniff at, you know. And, oh, the University of Hawaii would have sorority or fraternities would have dance. High schools would have their dances at Elk's Club, or at the old Waialae---Waialae Gold Club had a nice little clubhouse---where they allowed, you know, they rented it out to high schools, and so forth. So, almost every weekend, and then Saturday if you wanted to go dancing, there's some kind of dance someplace in town. Okay? Or even at the Aiea gym, or you know. Yeah. They would have dancing there. And, socially, yeah, we could meet at those, you know, occasions. But, most of the time, I think, you would find, one way or the other, you see 'em on the, well, various functions anyway, other than on the athletic field.

PN: How often did you go to dances?

WA: Oh, heck. When I was going to high school I used to go dancing Saturday nights, nearly every Saturday. Yeah. Well, I mean not almost every Saturday, I don't know. But, pretty regularly. We'd have someplace to go. We go usually on the truck, you know. So you'd say, like Ants Tamura's truck could carry maybe, oh, 20 of us. We'd pile 'em up. And beside that we had, ah, Mumpy Yano, who was also one of the Kakaako (boys); he played originally with the bigger boys 'cause he's a much older guy than we are. He played football for just a while. But most time he played baseball. He was a tall, lanky fellow. So, he played first base on the regular baseball team. But he had, ah, what we call, a fish hauling truck. And used to during the day, he'd take the aku catch from Kewalo Basin and all the way to the market. Okay? Or haul it between there and the cold storage. Or sometime, he even go out to Waianae or, you know, Nanakuli where the boat would come in. They don't have time to come to Honolulu; off-loaded over there. So, the truck would go there, and get the catch, and bring 'em back to town. 'Course, Saturday nights he's not working, so he would be often times our means of transportation. Smell like fish, but, anyway. (laughs) And we'd go. So you see, you have all of these, you might say, group activities; it becomes that way because your means of transportation, often times, that's the only way you can go any place. Get on the truck. Very few of us own our own cars, you know. If any, we didn't have a car.

PN: Would this be mostly guys?

WA: Oh, yeah, yeah. Of course, you won't have the girls. You met the girls at the dance hall.

PN: How would they get there?

WA: I don't know.

They find their way. They'd probably have their own truck. But we never inquired. Well, a lot of guys would have, and I guess if they have their car they'll probably take several girls, you know, with them. But usually we'd get on the truck and go.

PN: What kind of people used to attend these dances?

WA: Well, of course, the school kids, eh?

PN: All kinds?

WA: Our contemporary, you know. All kinds. Mostly from school. Maybe they high school kids. We were high school kids too.

PN: What nationality?

WA: All kinds.

PN: Mixed.

WA: Always a cosmpolitan. It reflected the school population. No different.

PN: What kind of dances?

WA: Oh, ballroom dancing. Well, all those days the popular dances were called the blues, the foxtrot, there were other stand bys. But the popular dances used to be the blues. And we'd dance the Lindbergh hop 'cause 1927 Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic. And there was the Back Bottom. But Lindbergh hop was popular for awhile. Usually those are they type of, ah, dance steps that we used when I was dancing regularly, when I was going to high school. And maybe couple a years, even after high school. You know.

PN: Was there any bands from Kakaako?

WA: Bands? No. No, no. Some of the famous bands were the Kalama brothers were there. And there was Al Kealoha Perry and his group. They later went on to become pretty famous. Ah, those are the names I recall. I don't remember the other names of the bands.

PN: Going back to sports like that, what was your parents' attitude towards playing?

WA: Oh, no, no. They didn't express anything. I had no opposition from my parents.

PN: Was there any kind of priorities placed, like school first and then....

WA: Naturally it's always understood that you have to do your school work. And, they insisted on your studying in the night light. Most parents, you'll find, of my contemporary would be very insistent on the kids studying at night. They must complete their homework. At least they would insist 'em, but whether they did it or not, you know. 'Course some of them didn't.

Generally speaking the parents' attitude were naturally school was important.

PN: Did you have any conflict between doing your household chores like that and sports?

WA: No, no. Because you see the way we did in those days, Kakaako, is a camp. By camp I mean the houses are very close together. Okay? You don't have a big, lush yard like you find in homes today. You don't have a 10,000 square feet lot, now. You just, your house is here. There's a common, right? Common, ah, roadway you might say. The next house is almost next door to you. You know, very close. So, there's very little yardwork to do other than sweeping around your house, and you know picking up the rubbish. There's no grass growing, the average home. Okay? We all had very small homes to begin with. The houses were in a camp. That's what we mean by camp. See? And you'd have the main street, of course. But you have these clusters, or groupings of houses. Cluster houses what they would call today. Okay? So, what's the chore to do? It's all rented. Mostly none of us, none of my parents own their home. We rented the house.

PN: You folks rented from who?

WA: From the landlord. I don't know who they are. To tell you the truth, I think some of it were owned by trust companies. And they'd come and collect the rent. They'd always have. All I remember is rent, is that the rent guy, somebody would come and collect the rent once a month. Our rent was very cheap, of course.

PN: You said you lived in, on South Street, Koula?

WA: Koula and Ahui.

PN: At the old camp type.

WA: Yeah, that's right. Two-story type, you know. Duplex, usually.

PN: Your neighbors were mainly what nationality?

WA: Japanese. But most of these are duplexes. Okay? Up and down stairs, you know? Two. Most houses were built that way. And you ate downstairs. And bedrooms would be upstairs. And your bathroom would be downstairs too. In fact, as I recall, when I was a kid, I don't think we had a bathroom. I mean, you know, we'd go to the furo. You know, bath house. In the camp, there would be a bathhouse, community bath house. That was real early in life as I recall. Just like Japan, you know? In a sense Japan has public bath houses, eh? And so, we'd go furo we'd call it. In which was supposed to be the bath house. But of course that disappear somewhere along the line. Exactly when, I don't recall. We went to Koula Street, when I was going to high school. And even before then, and then we moved to Ahui Street. Of course, after that I got married so that was already 1942. I got married in 1942. So, of course, I moved out. My family stayed in Kakaako, I think, for about another year or so. 'Cause after I got married, 'course the war came. My younger brother, was in already with the 442 (Army Regiment). My other brother, another younger brother, was married already by that time. In fact, Sadao was married immediately after I got, he got married too. So he lived, separately. My mother went to live with my sister. She got married.

PN: You know, when you folks were, living in this camp areas, did you do things together as a family with another family, like go to a picnic together?

WA: Yeah, the kind of picnic they would have would be Kenjin Kai picnic. In other words, clubs that are formed from people from the same prefecture. Okay? Or you may not be the prefecture, the town where they came from. Like my parents belong to Kusatsu Jin Kai. Which is, Kusatsu is a town in Hiroshima. Okay? It's part of Hiroshima City now, you see. And it's a township.

END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

WA: You might say a club like Kusatsu Jin Kai means the people who are in Hawaii now, who originally came from the town of Kusatsu. This is in Hiroshima. My mother also belonged to the Jigozen Jin Kai which is also in Hiroshima. So they would have annual picnics. So, naturally these would be the way you would, you know, have picnics as far as family picnics are concerned.

WA: No, the Kakaako YMA, besides the Kakaako YMA, as I recall, there was a Kakaako Chihoo Jin Kai they call that which means Kakaako district club. And these are older parents. The parents would belong to the Chihoo Jin Kai. And they'd have a picnic. And their parents would go. So, these are the kinds of social events. Aside from that, don't forget they're temples around. Most of our parents are Buddhists. So, maybe the Jodo Shu, many of the people from Kakaako are from Yamaguchi prefecture. They from Kamuro and Agenosho districts. They mostly belong to Jodo Shu, see. Which is on Makiki, you know that place? Formerly that Jodo Shu [temple] used to be in Kakaako, see, before they moved. And since most of us, our parents in Kakaako were fishermen, you know, their god, you might say fishing god, would Konpira, see. Konpira Jinja.

They would have social functions, you know. It would be fund raisers, or they would have maybe a dinner type of thing at the temple. Or at the Jinja, as the case may be. So you find life was rather simple in the sense, that it would be centered around affinity groups in terms of religion, in the case of Jodo Shu members, or Hongwanji members. Or the Jinja which is the god. Kamisama. Or in our case, in our community, Konpira, because Konpira is the god of the sea. All right? Or the Izumo Taisha, which is the name, you know. Izumo, it's still there in Palama. And they have, at New Year's, they'd have a whole series of sumo matches. That was a big event, Izumo Taisha, in the old days. I remember going with my father to sumo at Izumo Taisha. So it would be centered around these groups, see. Either the Kenjin Kai, or the, their religious group. Or the Chihoo district clubs. See? Or the language schools were wholly supported by tuition now. "Gessha" plus support from parents' contributions. See, it's a private school. So there's a close affinity to the language schools in the old days.

PN: So, like your childhood friends would be friends of your parents?

WA: Oh, sure, sure, because they,we were all growing up together. Next door neighbors mostly.

PN: You folks went to school together?

WA: Oh, sure, you go to school together. Go to English as well as language school. So, it's pretty hard for the modern youngster to visualize. Life was simple. Life was very close knit in the sense of community groups, eh? Because everything centered around the neighborhood in that sense. And you grew up together. Death in another man's family, or birth in another man's family would be known to everybody because you right living in the camp. The guy's sick, you know he's sick. Because, hell, you don't see him for a day or so, you wonder what happened? Right? So, you going immediately find out. Or either the word spread, "Oh, the man is sick, or the family is sick, something happened." Oh, you have lot of fights, too, you know. Because you so close, eh? Kids, eh? That's part of growing up. And afterwards you become good friends.

PN: Lot of your time you spent within the Kakaako district?

WA: Oh, sure, as you grew up.

PN: And you played in that area. How often would you leave that district of Kakaako to go out?

WA: Well, the way you would leave in the sense would be because you go then, lot of them leave there because they go to college. They continue on to University Hawaii, and then they other affinity groups, eh? But we'd go out, well, as I say, when go to dancing. What I'm talking about, while we growing up through high school. I'd say mainly our association with other

areas would be through the community dances. Palama Settlement would have a dance, eh? The high school would have a dance. Naturally, you have your friends association broadened, because when you go to high school, or intermediate school, then, you know, people from other--the students from other areas would come in. See? So, naturally, then you have, you broaden your association through your school association, initially.

But now as you go to work you broaden again through your work association. And I think that's pretty natural for us, as for anybody growing up in any community. Or any work function. Now in my case, as I've matured in all these years, most of my, association that I have as growing up, there's no way you can cut that bond. I may not see the person for 25, 30 years. Right? But, the moment I notice that, maybe his parents died, or he died, or he's ill, well, immediately, you know, oh, Jesus, you go, eh? You go to the funeral. Granted that you may not have seen him for the last 20 years because your paths have now diverged. He has his work. His work group is different from my work group, and you have a natural diversion take place. Mackay Yanagisawa is classic example. I haven't seen that guy for the last five years now. I talk to him on the phone. Yeah, but, see? The only time we see each other now, from when you grew up is maybe at a funeral of a mutual friend.

PN: Could we go back little bit and then talk about, like you said you used to hang around Tamura Store on the corner. What other areas would you folks hang out?

WA: Well, it's usually there, or the park.

PN: Oh, that was your two main areas?

WA: Yeah. It's a convenient area. Centrally located area for most of us come down. We'd meet there to go to the game, for instance. Lot of times, "Eh, let's meet there. Be there by 8 o' clock in the morning." You know? So everybody, we'd walk to that place. Get on the truck, and off we'd go.

PN: Yeah. How many of you would be hanging around?

WA: Oh, well, when you say hanging around, yeah, maybe we would have 20 guys, you know, who lived near that place.

PN: So this would be the same bunch who'd play football, and things like that?

WA: Most of them would be the same group. Not the old group. But, see, lot of football players that we had did not live in Kakaako, you know?

PN: Oh.

WA: They live in Pawaa. Maybe they would live up in Alapai, which is up

by King Street. It embraced all of them. They come and turn out, see? 'Cause they know some guy that from Kakaako. He say, "Eh, come on." Then they would invite 'em. If you wanna play for us, come out and practice. And they'd come out. Well, like Teizo Kurano, Ted Kurano. 'Cause I know him because he's a classmate of mine through junior high school, what you might say, through intermediate school days. I tell 'em, "Eh, come on, Ted, let's go play. You want play football?" "Yeah." So he comes out. See? That way we have other people too. But when you say hanging out. Those who are hanging out at, in terms in the evening, would be at Tamura Store, which was our hang out. We'd be only people who lived, you know, around Pohukaina Street. Right? Cooke Street. Ahui Street. Koula Street. Maybe down to Lana Lane. Eh? And that would be all within about two minutes walk from their home. Quite a few people live in that radius. You know? And these would be the people.

PN: Was there any other spots like that in your, you know...

WA: I guess so.

PN: ...where other people would gather?

WA: I guess so. But I don't know. 'Cause I didn't go. I would suspect there would be another group, like that in Alapai area 'cause that's another affinity group, you might say, because that's quite a big residential area those days. Not now but, you know. There might be the one down in, further down in, by Ala Moana. I would not know about those because they wasn't my affinity group.

PN: You said you folks played on several championship... you folks won several championships?

WA: Yeah.

PN: Was there any kind of community sponsored dinner for you folks?

WA: No, we...

PN: Or special event?

WA: Well, I guess so. The district group, the older people would probably give us. But I don't remember maybe because most of these things, you kind of spontaneously it comes up. Right? You see? It comes spontaneously, or we'd be honored maybe when the Chihoo Jin Kai have their annual get together.

PN: After every game, would you folks get together and have beer or something?

WA: No, I don't recall doing that. We may have, but not as a organized party, or anything like that. Wasn't very common those days. After all, you know, it's prohibition days, don't forget. No legalized beer, you know.

PN: Yeah. Oh, oh, oh.

WA: And, talking about 1931, you know. 1932, 1933. I don't know. When did they legalize, ah? About 1938, 1939, wasn't it?

PN: I'm not sure. What about this softball team you played for--what was their name?

WA: Atkinson.

PN: And what position did you play?

WA: I caught. I was a catcher. My main position was catcher.

PN: Who was the coaches, coach of the team?

WA: Uichi Kanayama.

PN: He was coaching in the baseball too?

WA: Oh, yeah. Until now the Kakaako YMA sponsored the AJA team. Then, at that time, the coach was Iwa Mamiya. Iwa lived in Kakaako. Iwa wasn't Kakaako boy, but he married, you know, one of the girls from Kakaako. The Aoki girl. Had a store down at the end of Cooke Street. Near Ala Moana and Cooke Street. So, he played for Kakaako first, and then, Uichi was coaching, but then Uichi gave the coaching job to Iwa coach for awhile.

PN: Can you tell me a little bit more about this baseball. You said as a team there was only two gloves for the catcher and the first baseman.

WA: Oh, well, that's softball.

PN: Softball.

WA: Yeah, that's 14-inch ball. See, usually you play that indoors.

PN: Indoors?

WA: Yeah. The 14-inch ball, it's really we call indoor baseball. Used to be called indoor baseball. In fact, we used to play it at the gym.

PN: What gym?

WA: Oh, Kawaiahao Gym. As kids we play indoor baseball but, later on, we call the playground league and we had this softball league. When we say softball, in our case we mean the 14-inch outseam ball. Okay?

PN: Yeah.

WA: Bases are very short. The field can be very small. The ball won't fly as far. So, I was catcher for the team. I mean I played catch. 'Course, we had another catcher. We always had substitutes for several positions. Each position maybe had two guys playing. Somebody get hurt, we'd substitute the some guy that would be off that day, you know, took another guy. Or, we will alternate catching because some pitcher and I work together better than the other catcher, although he's also good catcher but, you know, he work with another pitcher. So when certain pitcher would come in, that day I would catch from. 'Cause he and I work better together. And the other guy pitch, he would go in. So, we would have, I would have a glove and the first baseman. Everybody else were bare handed. Can't fool around with a glove on that game. Bang! It's so fast, you know? The bases were short. And they would allow bunting. Chop the ball. And, so the third baseman would be almost right by the batter. Yeah, when you think you should bring 'em in. See, the catcher usually would move the positions 'cause he knows what he's gonna call for if he move the fielders.

PN: Was this fast pitch?

WA: Fast. Fast pitch. Underhand ball. Underhanded pitch. Everything had to be thrown underhanded. You can't go sidearm, now. Strict rule on that. And, in this indoor ball, you cannot wind and throw like the other kind. You have to come to a stop. This other kind, I mean, you know, underhanded, so the guy can wind, so you don't know when he releases the ball, eh? Those are the longer base. But they're smaller ball. Small ball. I don't know, ours was, I don't know what you call it, 14-inch balls, or what. The other is the 12-inch balls.

PN: And this Atkinson team was mainly Japanese again?

WA: Yeah. As I say, wasn't necessarily barred, now. It just happened to be. Because, as I say, although we had Chinese. Ted Yap, for instance. A Chinese boy, used to be a good player. Played for us. He hang out and played with us. He rather come out with us than go out with the Hawaiians, maybe.

PN: So there was no age limit or weight limit?

WA: No. One thing there's no age limit, or weight limit as far as softball is concerned. The only weight limit--the only limit we had was football, by weight. 120, 134, 150 (pounds) and so forth.

PN: And practice would be from, I guess....

WA: Same thing. For all team, eh? 'Course some people are working, you know. Some of our peers are working. Some are going to school. Usually would be in the evenings.

PN: When would you play your games?

WA: Sunday morning. Games always were played Sundays those days.

PN: How about the crowd?

WA: Oh, yeah, we had good crowds. Oh, I would say we drew about 1,000 people. It's not unusual. But don't forget there's several games goes on simultaneously in softball. Oh the playground. One maybe on one end. Another team can be playing on this end of the field. Big field. You got two games can be going on.

PN: Like Mother Waldron Park.

WA: Nah, that's too small, but you take maybe Atkinson Park. We could have two softball games going on simultaneously without any problems. We played, I remember we played at Palama Settlement. We played at Kaluwela School. We played at Makiki part, there you can have only one game. We played Moiliili field. Moiliili field usually you see two games going on. Even now.

PN: Could you talk a little bit about strategy like that. Bunting. Was there a lot of hit and run kind of thing?

WA: Oh, yeah. You have the usual strategy although in softball you can't... but later on we barred the bunting. But you can chop the ball. Or you wait. Like sometime the strategy would be wait out the pitcher. Other time, hit the first one coming across. Any good ball you hit. That type see? We had stealing too, now. You could steal bases when we played. But now, they play softball, you cannot steal. That's why when you get into Makule League you cannot steal. Makule League you can run only when the ball is hit. You cannot run otherwise.

PN: Did you play basketball?

WA: No. I played, but I didn't play team basketball. I just fool around in the sport, I didn't participate in.

PN: What did you do, you know, like in spring time was baseball, and September to December was football season, I guess. What did you do in between that time?

WA: Oh, well, I wouldn't know what I did other than, of course, the usual things maybe. We'd go to the beach anytime. In fact, after football we used to walk and go to the beach anytime. Waikiki Beach, places like that, and swim. So probably go to the beach, I suppose. We probably be, oh, fishing maybe. Swimming. That's about all I would think. If we didn't have any organized thing going on,then probably do something on your own as an individual. But even those recreation, and maybe on an organized basis, usually you meet up with the group. You know? The same guys would be there. Or different people who like to go swimming at about the same time. Before you know it, there'd be about 20 guys at the house. But, as I recall that's about all we did. I don't recall doing anything special.

PN: Why do you think sports was so popular back then? That you can play that during high school, and even after high school.

WA: Yeah, I think, it was sort of a natural kind of activity for people who have a playground nearby. It's not too expensive the way we participated. Barefoot. Didn't require too much equipment. Lot of them, they didn't even use shoulder pads. Let alone, we did not have head gear. Just a jersey, really. And the pants that you have is your own pants, that you would provide yourself. No shoes, no socks, like that. Even in softball the same way. You know? All you need is a shirt, would be the only kind of uniform you had. You don't have a cap, or you don't need a glove except for the catcher, and maybe the first baseman. So it was very minimum of expense, and yet it is very easy to organize because of that. As kids, I guess, we instinctively played it anyway.

As we grew up we played baseball or softball. We played football, touch football and that kind of thing. You not really playing football, but you see the sport. I think that's sort of a natural outgrowth of the type of activities that you grew up with, you might say. I don't know now what the situation is. Things seem to be more formal like. You have to have a team for everything. Like Little League. Well, it's all right little League. You have to form Little League teams because there is no natural, I think, affinity groups. There not too many camps anymore like the old days. You live in your own cottage with a fence around with a yard. So the kid grows up in his own home. In our case, you already grew up in a group. The camp itself is a already a natural grouping. So, group activities I think was much more easily formed than what it is today. People have their own homes. Separate, apart from another guy's home. Although you may live next door to each other. The fence kind of cuts you off.

PN: Why do you think was there so much community interest in this?

WA: Because our parents did not have the opportunity for any other kind of diverse interest than to form natural affinity groups. The fishermen are fishing families. Everything centers around maybe the Jinja. Konpira Jinja. The people say, "Oh, why don't we have our own Chiho Jin Kai?" They get together in the district clubs. Before that they are members of their own Kenjin Kai, which is a prefecture clubs, or town clubs where they came from. This is their social outlet. It centered around their temple or their...and this kind of came down to us. We didn't have anything else than this. Only thing we had better opportunity to go to school and we had Pioneer Clubs and Hi-Y Clubs. We had our own school clubs. As you grow up and you get, you broaden... But not our parents.

PN: Did your parents attend these football and baseball games like that?

WA: No, my parents did not. My father did not. My father was a fisherman. The only thing he attend sumo matches. He was a wrestler as a youth.

PN: Oh, oh, oh.

WA: Yeah. That is his group.

PN: 'Cause I was wondering, could the older people who came from Japan...

WA: Oh, some of our parents did. Yeah, yeah. Sure. Sure. Some of my contemporaries' father, one of the fathers, was a great booster of our clubs. He was a taxi driver, he provided our transportation, because his kid was playing.

PN: Did they understand football?

WA: Oh, yeah. Sure, they do. Yeah, they do. Yeah, they'll learn. But not too many. Not too many.

PN: So the crowd was usually younger...

WA: Yeah, younger people. Yeah, non-participants, you might say. Very few of our parents attended sporting events. I know my father didn't. The only thing he really went for was sumo once a year at Izumo Taisha. Or even with the Konpira Jinja. He would go. You know, sumo was pretty popular for us, for youngsters. Like us, too, they like to have us kids wrestle. You know?

PN: Did you folks have a sumo matches?

WA: Sure, we had. I was wrestling when I was a kid. Sure. Fishermen they like because to the older Japanese, that's their sport. Right? So they kind of let us--oh, we had our dohyo, you might say. What they might call right in the Konpira ground there. Oh, yes. We would have sumo matches and we would be the participants...

PN: Would anybody...train you or something?

WA: No, I guess part of the...

PN: And they would have a festival or something?

WA: Yeah, yeah. My father used to try to teach me how to wrestle. What kind of..., you know, how they do certain holds. Oh, yeah.

PN: Would you folks wear the...rope belt?

WA: Oh, yes. In the traditional manner. You don't need that as kids though, as we grew up we didn't go... And you know when I say kids, when we were maybe eight up to 11, 12 years old. You know? But the limit of the participation. Maybe from oh, six years old. You know? And then, we'd wrestle. Parents would have a great kick out of seeing their kids wrestle. But it wasn't organized in the sense that they have a sumo club now. It's a sort of a spontaneous kind of thing that kids, you know, would learn from their father, how to wrestle.

PN: You would wrestle through the Konpira Jinja?

WA: Yeah, usually my neighborhood friends would be in Konpira Jinja, as I recall. They make it up, you know, for this. And we would go first to have practice, you know. You would go up and practice. Then you have the regular matches at the temple festival.

PN: Was there a lot of this kind of Konpira Jinja? You know, like they would celebrate the big catch or something?

WA: Nah, nah. It's a regular festival days. It's not a big catch, or anything like that. They have their own, you know, days. I don't know what they are, I even forgot when we did that already. See? It's so long ago. They would have matsuri. They know when it is. They pass out notices. Then they have, usually with that they would have a benefit movie.

PN: Oh, yeah?

WA: Yeah. Benefit movies were very popular in those days. One of the most money-making shows were series of Mito Komon movies. It's going on televison now.

PN: Channel 13?

WA: Yeah. 'Cept it was silent those days. With the benshi. You know? Yeah. We made lot of money on Mito Komon series.

PN: You said you folks would sell a plot 3 by 3 and what? A family would come in and sit down?

WA: Well,yeah. It's a one yard square, 3 by 3. That would be one. Couple of guys can sit there. Some of them would buy two or three. Yeah?

PN: How much would each plot cost?

WA: I don't remember. I think it was about a buck, or something like that. In fact, was cheaper than that, as I recall. Maybe it was 75 cents at the most, or 50 cents. I don't know. I don't think we charge a dollar. Dollar was alot of money those days.

PN: And then, what would they do? Just sit down?

WA: They bring their own mat and sit on it.

PN: They wouldn't bring any food or...

WA: Or, sure they bring. Those buggas brought their own bento if it is going to be in the evening. Or we'd sell hotdogs or stuff like that. Oh, sure, we'd have our own concession, and we'd sell hotdogs and soda pops, shave ice, that kind of thing. In those days, the Board of Health wasn't so damn strict. You can get by with, you know, buying

your own stuff, and then selling it.

PN: Where would you folks get a projector?

WA: The guy would bring it.

PN: Oh, the guy with the movies?

WA: Oh, yeah. You had to rent...arrange for. Yeah. Oh, yeah, he had the movies, the projector, everything else. Even the benshi comes with it. Oh, you'd pay them for it.

PN: Oh, so it's a whole package deal.

WA: That was the biggest expense.

PN: And this person or persons would...

WA: They go around all over.

PN: They come from Japan?

WA: No, local. Yeah, they go to the country, go to the other islands and all that.

PN: Oh, yeah?

WA: You know who did that? The Matsuo family. You know, before they had a theatre even.

PN: Matsuo?

WA: Yeah. Matsuo family used to do that. I don't know his first name. He died long time ago, several years ago. That was very, what you call, popular form of entertainment for Japanese community throughout the state. The other very popular form of entertainment was naniwa bushi. Naniwa bushi is monologue, you might say in English. One guy would come, he would sing, he would take a different part. He was right on a stage. By himself, or in a auditorium. Now that was popular. He'd get hired from place to place also.

PN: Was that shibai?

WA: No, not shibai. It's naniwa bushi. One man. Usually one and another. The lady would accompany with the sound background, samisen, eh? But, oh yeah, he come from Japan. Usually he come from Japan. And when they come they not only perform at a main theatre, let's say, but then, lot of these temples and people would ask them to come for money-making benefit shows.

PN: How much people would attend one event?

WA: How many. Oh, I don't know. Maybe, 300, 400 would be a good crowd in a small community. Quite a lot of people, you know, to squeeze in a little place.

PN: Where did you folks hold your fund raisers?

WA: We usually had it at Konpira grounds. At the Jinja.

PN: That would hold several hundred people?

WA: Oh, yeah. You know big yard. Pretty big yard. You try put 3 by 3 even in this room here. And sitting one after that, two in each of 'em. You can seat quite a few people in there. All you have the narrow passageway, eh? Enough to just for one foot passageway and walk, and you just open here and there, if they have to go through another person place they just say, "Gomen nasai," and they walk through. And bring their own zabuton, mat, and sit on it. Eh, you know how those days we can sit cross-leg for hours. Japanese people can sit like that.

PN: You know in, back to high school, you didn't play any high school sports?

WA: No, I didn't. I was too small anyway. I didn't play any. Oh, other than, what do you call, physical ed time. You know? Not for the team. No, no.

PN: Was there anybody you knew who played? You know from Kakaako, who played for McKinley?

WA: Not football. Because we were small. Eh? But, baseball, probably, yes. But I don't remember who did, or didn't, to tell you the truth.

PN: Usually it was, ah, size had a lot to do playing...

WA: Football? Oh, sure.

PN: ...in high school?

WA: You have to have the weight. You have to have the height, the speed. You know, 120-pounders didn't have much chance to play high school line. You had a guy weighing, what 175, 200 pounds.

PN: Another question I have to ask you is, was there anybody on the Atkinson team who played for the Kakaako Sons?

WA: Ah, no. Oh, yeah. I take it back. We did. We did. We did have couple of guys went up and played for Kakaako Sons. Ah, Buster Kinoshita one of them. And, Mike Takaoka played. They were bigger, see, than we were. Although they weren't really as big as the Hawaiians. But they did play. Ah, Buster played fullback. Although at that time that he played he weighed about 145 pounds. And

that's pretty good weight for that Kakaako Son league those days. You know? Of course, now you know, too small. But, ah...

PN: Did any of you folks, hang around the Kakaako Sons?

WA: No, we didn't hang around as such. Wait. Kakaako Sons came from all over but, really. But we would know them because we would be scrimmaging. You know, playing on the same field. Not scrimmaging, but they would practice on the same field.

PN: They would come out and help you folks?

WA: Oh, yeah. All of them would come out and help. When we scrimmaging they come up and teach us. They older and more experienced. They better players. Always they would be help each other. The Kakaako Sons did have a 150-pound team. I know we would scrimmage that team once in a while. They want us to scimmage--to play against speed. And we would scrimmage. We want to play against weight for only.

PN: There was no, like rivalry...

WA: No, no. No. Was very friendly relationship. The two coaches would get together and say, "Hey, can we scrimmage you people?" You know? 'Course, you have to remember, it's controlled scrimmage because there's such a weight difference. More for, they want us run the plays against them. You know? We faster than they are. More like for them, agility drills. And he would be planning his defensive strategy. 'Cause we would run the plays for them that they think the other team, the opponents going be running. See? That kind of stuff. Rather than, you know, they would use their own people to do the same. See, in football practice you gotta remember, that you have so many people on the football squad, as many as you can because you always use one group to run the opponent's play if you happen to scout them and know what they doing. And your defensive plays against them as they run the opposition's plays. How to stop 'em.

PN: Would you folks go out and scout the guy's opponents?

WA: Oh, sure. We watch. I used to coach--later on; I didn't tell you--but I coached the Hinode Kai barefoot team with Teizo Kurano. I used to watch the next opponent when I have chance. In fact, sometimes if they playing same time I'd be scouting the other team.

PN: How come you went to coach Hinode Kai? That's...

WA: Because Teizo, who played with me in Atkinson, became the coach. He want me to help him coach.

PN: Oh, I see. I thought since you come from Kakaako you would coach Kakaako.

WA: No. No. At that time we didn't have a team already, Atkinson. Because the community begin breaking up. We didn't have a team.

PN: When were you coaching the Hinode Kai?

WA: Oh, I already moved out of Kakaako.

PN: Oh, this is after 1942?

WA: Oh, yeah. Yeah, after I moved out.

PN: So you got into coaching because of your friends?

WA: Oh, yes.

PN: So you spent couple of years coaching the Hinode Kai, then you... Oh, you were coaching Farrington?

WA: Well, I was coaching Farrington. In fact, I continued coaching, even after I moved out of Kakaako because I coached Farrington even after I got married. So up till about 1943 season, you know, I coached Farrington. Hinode Kai, I coached them before that. After I gave up playing football in Kakaako, which was about 1935, I think. You know, 1934 or 1935--1934 or 1935, and I coached Hinode Kai, up till about, well, 30, for about three or four years. I don't recall exactly how many years. 'Cause after the war, you know, forget it. I have not done any coaching or anything like that.

PN: You said you married in 1942.

WA: Yeah, or after the war started.

PN: You gave up playing football prior to this?

WA: Oh, yeah. Sure. (Chuckles) Way before that. I gave up playing football in 1934 or 1935. I gave up playing most sports about that time, organized sports. I didn't have time to go out practice. Remember I'm working full-time. I did it for Farrington, on my own time, but do it because you have to go after school there. You know, about 2:30, eh? Well, it's sacrificing my vacation, because of my friend, Henry Kusunoki, and Uichi Kanayama, asking me to help the school. So, sort of love, eh? Love of the game. But before then I used to help Teizo. 'Course that's after work, you know? Go down to Pawaa. We'd practice at Makiki field. It's close enough. You know? At that time I had automobile, don't forget. Had my own junk, you know? I had my own junk.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Tape No. 3-30-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Wallace Amioka (WA)

February 16, 1978

Ala Moana Building

BY: Perry Nakayama (PN)

PN: This is a second interview with Mr. Wallace Amioka on February 16, 1978, in the Ala Moana Building. Mr. Amioka, last time you told us that you used to hang around the Tamura Store. Why did you folks hang around there?

WA: Well, it just was a very convenient meeting place. That's all. Most of the boys lived, you know, within a walking radius of this store, which happen to be a one of the convenient places; because "Ants" Tamura was one of the boys.

PN: Oh, I see. His parents owned that store?

WA: Yeah, his parents own the store.

PN: What kind of store was that?

WA: Oh, general grocery store and had candy, you know, the usual things from a sort of a neighborhood store. But, their main business, of course, the father had a business--the fish market, Aala Fish Market. But, the family, the wife and, you know, some of the kids ran the small, little store there. Mostly, convenience items.

PN: They didn't mind you folks?

WA: No, we didn't stay at the store, now. We're right outside of it. On the corner there. Not in the store.

PN: They didn't mind that you folks, you know, hung around that area?

WA: No, no. Because we were good--their customers, too.

PN: Oh. Like, you were saying, the father used to be a like a backer for the Atkinson Club?

WA: Most of all of our parents were, you might say, more or less, a backer because they all would contribute when we hold benefit shows. All of our parents, naturally, would come. So, you might say all of the parents were backers. There were no specific individual who, you know, was a main backer, or anything like that. Was a community supported team; athletic events and so forth.

PN: I was wondering, what were your brothers doing at that time? Were they hanging around you, or did they have their own friends?

WA: No, no, no. They had their own group. They were much, you know, different age groups. So, we would not (be) going together. They had their own, you know, interest. Like my kid brother, one of the ones who's not with us anymore-- he died some years ago-- he was more interested in boxing. So, he would be with the boxing group, you know. We had a Kewalo Athletic Club which was the boxing--that was a boxing gym. Not where we hanged out, but further down. But, within Kakaako district, down Ilaniwai Street. Well, that group would be, more or less, their interest would go that way, so.

PN: Their hangout would be the gym?

WA: Yeah, but other times, like my kid brother he would be hanging around the Alapai people. They were classmates with him.

PN: And what were your sisters doing?

WA: Well, they was just like all girls at that time, of course, they were going to school, and going home and helping my parents. You don't find those girls at that time hanging around the street corners, or anything like that.

PN: Did any of 'em get involved in, you know, sports, or anything like that?

WA: Nah, not those girls. Unless they just have some intramural sports in school, you know. All schools had physical education, eh.

PN: I was wondering, you know, what the girls did. Seems like most of the guys were either into sports or, you know, hanging around.

WA: Nah, not the girls.

PN: You know, would you consider the area you hung around, like Tamura Store, would be you folks' area? Your territory kind-of-thing?

WA: Ah, it wasn't anything, not in the sense, I think, what you inferring there. You had a territory there, and one gang don't let anybody else come in, and you would have fight. No, no.

It was just a convenient meeting place. You don't hang around in the sense that you stay there all day. After all, we'd go to school, and we'd have our practice sessions in the playgrounds or the park, and just in the evening we would probably meet, for few--maybe half hour, maybe an hour. Many of us have to go back home. And we'd do some studying and so forth. But, on weekends, yeah, maybe we can be hanging around there, after the football game, for instance, we'd go there and maybe hang around. Talk about the game for an hour or so [then] we'd go home and take a shower. That would be the end of it. It's a meeting place, a gathering point, more than just a place that you would envision hanging around, "this is your territory, everybody keep out, now." Nah, we didn't have that type of a

gang.

PN: Another thing I was wondering about was, people say Kaka'ako used to be known as a "rough" district.

WA: Yeah, I think it's a lot of mostly reputation. We had various teams there, and we had other teams composed mostly of the Hawaiian and Portuguese boys and so forth, which were the bigger teams, you know. You might say barefoot. They all barefoot teams. And occasionally, I guess, they'd play Kalihi, or they would, Pawaa, and they'd get in a fight. You know, after the game. But, it really isn't what they make it out to be. Actually the problem used to arise from nearby Fort Armstrong, it was post, okay? Lot of soldiers used to come around at Magoon Block; whole Queen Street had a place called Magoon Block. There would be barber shops, you know, restaurants and the soldiers from the post would come around, and while they do, they might fool around the girls, or molest the girls, and pretty soon, you know, there would be a fight with one of the local boys. And then, of course, he'd go back and, you know, and bring his help, and then, there might be a street fight--gang fight of that nature. But, I don't recall it being, you know, as much as people make it out to be.

Of course, we had our shares of fight with other groups. It's normal for those days, but it wasn't anything that last forever. After all, some of my best friends are the people that we used to get difficulty. We may have had a few scraps together, but what the heck, you know. That's part of growing up in those days. You had your differences, you fought it out, on a fair one-to-one basis most of the time. I think, that is kind of overly exaggerated. I think part of it, though, however, lot of people from Kaka'-ako kind of want to perpetuate their reputation, when they talk about the old time, you know.

PN: So, you folks, did you have allowance?

WA: No, no, I don't think those days, we were not the way we raise our kids today. No. If I wanted to save some money, I took it out of my lunch money. I wouldn't eat lunch, for instance. If I want to go, say, go to the theatre, or go to the dance--the school dances, and so forth, what I used to do it, save my nickels and dimes out of my lunch money, and just come home and eat cracker and jelly, maybe. We didn't have the luxury of getting a fix allowance of so many 50 cents or even a dollar a week. No, heaven's no. You know, money was pretty hard to come by, those days. A nickel went farther than it is today, you know. You could buy a hamburger for 15 cents and it's a good one. Or you can go to the movies in downtown for 15 cents those days.

PN: How often did you folks go to the movies?

WA: Oh, I don't think we went too often. Of course, we go to the local theatre. That was a nickel.

PN: Oh yeah?

WA: You know, Aloha Theatre, right on the corner of, I guess that's Coral and Queen Street; used to have a nickeldome, we used to call 'em like, eh. Well, they would call 'em nickeldome. And we'd go there, yeah. But, that was only nickel admission. But, no, not too often.

PN: You said you used to frequent that Raleigh's Ice Cream Parlor, too.

WA: Yeah, we'd go out there, but I wouldn't say frequent. It's just occasion, or so. It would be a special deal when we go up there. The whole gang would walk up, and it's still there. You spend maybe a nickel, or a dime at most, you know. You get a nice sundae for a dime.

PN: Was there any way, you know, you folks could earn side money like that?

WA: Oh, sure. Most of us work. We work during the summertime. We all work in the cannery, when we could work. But, that was, of course, much later, when we were ready. But, most of us already were going to high school by the time we worked during the summertime. Or before then, even, I used to work at a service station, to pick up few, you know, few change. We don't get much pay, but was enough to make maybe a dollar or so. We'd go to work few hours at a service station after school.

PN: What service station was this?

WA: Oh, it's on the corner of what do you call it--ah, Ala Moana and Ward.

PN: Ward Warehouse?

WA: Yeah. Ward Warehouse, where it is now on that corner on Ala Moana and Ward on the Waikiki corner there. Waikiki mauka corner, the other side is the wharf, eh.

PN: Yeah.

WA: Was the Union Service Station over there. And, I go and help, you know, after school for couple of hours, or so.

PN: Would you give some of your money to your family?

WA: Ah, yeah, whatever extra, but most of it was for myself. You don't earn much, you know. (laughs)

PN: How much do you earn an hour?

WA: Two bits an hour; you lucky you get two bits an hour those days. We talking about the days cannery used to pay 15 cents an hour.

PN: Just couple more questions on, you know, money, like that. You know of any youths who had to quit school like that, to help support the family?

WA: Oh, I would think so. In my days, you know, there were, most of 'em are

Kakaako families, you might say. Not so much among the Japanese family, but I would say mostly around the Portuguese and Hawaiian families. I think most of them did not go to high school. Not most of them--I really don't know the statistics. But, I think a lot of the ones went probably just to junior high school, see. Intermediate school, what you call now. See, intermediate school in the state started around 19-- oh, 1928, okay? I remember around 19-- because I was 7th grade then, and I had to shift from Pohukaina to Washington Intermediate, as an eighth grader. 'Cause I finish Washington in '29, 1929. And, I think most of the, a great deal of the Portuguese, Hawaiian boys and kids, that I never saw in high school, okay. So, I assume they went to work, or quit, drop out, you know. What you would call dropouts today.

PN: Could you, you know, talk about this Japanese school. You said you attended Japanese school.

WA: Oh, yeah. There were two Japanese language schools in Kakaako. There was a huge problem there, when the legislature passed the law that the language schools would come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Instruction. But, these were private schools, okay. And one group, all right, one group opposed the control by the Department of Public Instruction, but the other group said, okay we should. So, the Japanese language schools really split in two. In many areas. In my area, of course, Kakaako had two groups. One went to the--said, that well, we want to conform with the law. The other said, we will fight it. And that case was finally settled in the Supreme Court of the United States. And the people that said that they should not come under jurisdiction of Department of Public Instruction won, because this was not public funds, eh.

This was strictly private, you know. Tuition basis. So, my language school was Kakaako Japanese language school. I continued to go there on the corner of Coral and Queen Street. The other group established their own school in Kakaako, but their location was, I would say, near Ahui Street, or someplace there, you know. And, near Ilaniwai. But, anyhow, after I attended there for--till about oh, I would say about the 7th, 6th grade, I think, then I went to Chuo Gakuen, which is on Nuuanu. And their's of course, that was high school you might say. Japanese High School. Equivalent to high school, they call it.

And then, of course the other school was Chuu Gakko, you know which is affiliated with the Hongwanji Temple. But, I went to the Chuo Gakuen, which was located on Nuuanu, near the--where the old Hosoi Mortuary used to be, on Vineyard. Just about Vineyard, on Nuuanu. Originally, it was there. Then, the school moved way over by Judd Street, on Nuuanu. And, I used to go there until, oh, I was I would say, sophomore in high school. I left there, when I was equivalent, to about language school equivalent, to about what they call koto chu gakko, you know but. You might say equivalent to about the 10th grade in English school. So I did go there till about 1929, yeah.

PN: So your changing Japanese school. Was it due to the split...?

WA: No, no, no, no. It's just that I went on to a higher level. Continued on a higher level. And I walked--we walked from--I used to walk from Kaka'ako to go to Washington, then walk. We then, walk all the way to Nuuanu after school, then walk home. And of course, the language school was Saturday, too. So Saturday morning I'd go and walk to Nuuanu, and walk back. We didn't have the luxury of bicycles even those days.

(PN laughs)

PN: What was your parents' reactions towards that hassle, you know, the split?

WA: No, no. My parents were with the group that did say we shouldn't conform. In fact, my father was one of the leaders who says, "Heck, no. It's illegal for them to try to make us become under the DPI control when we were just a private school."

PN: Did he attend meetings, or something?

WA: Oh, yeah. They had their usual. But, my father was a fisherman, you know, so he wasn't home very often. But, whenever they had a meeting, he would go. You see, the way this language schools operated, besides the tuition, all the parents had additional contributions. They call it support fund. And, I used to earn a few dollars, I mean earn some commission. I used to collect some of those things call hojokin, see. Hojo means to help. Support fund. And, it was voluntary, you know. But, we would contribute; maybe a family would go additional and would say, "Come and get a dollar a month," or something like that.

PN: What would you do? You'd go over to their house?

WA: Yeah. Collect the money, and then turn 'em in to the school.

PN: Would you sign a receipt and give it to them?

WA: Oh, yeah. Sure, you got to give 'em the receipt. Naturally, they got a receipt book. And they knew who I was. But, I used to go to the parents and say, "Look, I came to collect hojokin for this month." Sometimes, 50 cents, you know. But, those big money those days. 50 cents, a dollar.

PN: What was the tuition at that time?

WA: Oh, I don't know. My parents. I think it was pretty nominal, maybe about dollar, dollar a month, or dollar quarter a month per student. This is probably what it would have been. It was not much more than that.

PN: You know when this, I guess, split was going on, did you know other people in the other school like that?

WA: Oh, sure. The students weren't concerned, you know.

PN: Didn't it affect your friendship in any manner?

WA: No. I wasn't--we didn't know what the issue was. This I tell you now, since later on I found out what was the issue all about, see. When I grew little older, and found out what was the issue. The split was way back, you know. We were young yet.

PN: Oh, oh, I see. Going back to this, you know, collecting this money again. Did the school authorize you?

WA: Oh, yeah. Of course. You working for the school. You helping the school, you know.

PN: How many of you would go around and collect?

WA: Oh, I don't know. I had my area, and maybe another student had his area, too. But, I think I covered most of the area, I think. Maybe I was the only one, I really don't know. It just a kind of a help, partial volunteer-type deal.

PN: I see. What was the approximate enrollment at your school?

WA: Oh, I have no idea. I wouldn't even hazard a guess. Probably there might have been about, there's about six grades so, probably maybe 400, 500, at most, if that many. My class had about, oh, 35, maybe, students. So, you figure out, even if you get, oh, I don't think even that many. I have no idea. Maybe 300, maybe it would have been the maximum, I think.

PN: Can we talk about politics? You said you were involved in politics in the 1930's. What party did you belong to?

WA: I didn't belong to any party. I was just strictly an independent worker supporting the candidates. I work for specific candidates.

PN: How did you get involved?

WA: Well, mostly you get involved from friends who are really working for the candidate, and ask your help with their campaign. And other people would have the same kind of request, and they would help their candidate. What I envision was, there was no point in all of us working at cross-purposes, regardless of what the party affiliation of the candidate you supporting. It was just a case of trying to get your candidate in. And, if you had to "horse-trade," this is what we did. We strike a bargain usually. Because, you know, we have multiple districts, okay? Multiple, you know, it's not a single representative district. So there's always room, you know, say, "Okay, even if he's a Republican, how about you supporting me?" I'll support your Democratic candidate. Okay? And this is the way we work out our own slate. See, in our precinct, 19th (Precinct) of the 4th (District), which was predominant Democratic. But, still I help Hebden Porteus, for instance. I remember working for him when he first ran. I worked hard for him and he led the ticket of all the candidates.

PN: Why did you select Hebden Porteus?

WA: Well, as I say, a friend ask me to.

PN: Oh, I see.

WA: That's the only reason why.

PN: Did you know at that time what you were getting involved in?

WA: Oh, sure. We know what we getting involved in. We support the candidate and then, we had our own reasons to do so. We wanted, for instance, we wanted our park improvement, and things like that. And we'd support the guy and ask 'em if he would, you know, put in the bill.

PN: He covered an area of Kakaako plus....

WA: Oh, a precinct. You know, like every precinct now. I don't know what the area is. We happen to be one of his precinct. But, it was part of that, Pawaa and maybe downtown someplace would be in that precinct. But, I was concern only with the 19 of the 4th, because that was my precinct.

PN: Who was one of the maybe heads of this group?

WA: I don't know. I don't remember. We just form our own group. And, I found out. Yono Kitagawa had his own support. He wants to support somebody. I say, "Okay, Yono. Let's talk. We work." So, we organize ourself together.

PN: What would you folks do? Canvass?

WA: Oh, yes. We'd walk--I'd take my candidate around door-to-door. Introduce him to my friends, and support him. Yono does the same thing, but on election day, the word's already out that we pass out my card--he pass out; I pass out his cards, you know. Those days, you could pass 'em out pretty close to the precinct. Not like now. But, we organized, you know. We had cars to go pick up the voters where they working. You know, we'd send the car, we'd check off the guys coming in. You know, who came to vote. And, if he's not there yet. Bang--we use the dispatch car. We'd organize. A regular working group. But, I wasn't affiliated with the party. But then, the candidate headquarters, wherever he is, I says, "Oh, you got to send so much lunches," because that's where they used to work. They'd come around. They know who your workers. Ask how many guys working. All day, you know. So, they'd bring your lunch.

PN: The party would....

WA: Oh, yeah. Not the party, the candidates campaign headquarters you might say, would bring the lunches for us. But, within the 19 of the 4th, I knew all the voters. So, when they come in, we'd check 'em off. Okay? And the guys not here, then we know where he works. So, I say, "Okay, go send the car. Bring 'em down. Put the vote in." Naturally, he's going vote for your candidate, yeah. And he can also vote for some of his own, because

there's about, you know, five or six you can vote for those days.

PN: What was peoples' reaction to, you know, you bringing around the candidates to their houses?

WA: Very friendly. No problem.

PN: Even if that was a heavy Republican...

WA: No problem.

PN: ...Democratic district?

WA: No problems, no problems, no problems. Your friend, my friend. They don't care about the party. Your friend is my friend. That's the attitude we all had in Kaka'ako. At least in my precinct.

PN: Did you folks have speeches and rallies?

WA: Yeah, we had rallies. Park, in those days. You know, you have a regular political rallies. Each party would come in and they'd have hula dancing and then music, and they put up a political platform in every public park in the precinct. And, the candidates would come in.

PN: Where was...

WA: Mother Waldron Park, in Kakaako.

PN: What was Kumalae Block? Did they have a...

WA: I don't know where--oh, that's further down, Kumalae. No, I think most of our rallies for the precinct was in Waldron Park.

PN: And who would be paying for all this entertainment?

WA: The party, I guess. They would have a Democratic party rally. There would have a Republican party rally. The party would pay for that. Oh, no. I wasn't concerned with that. But, we'd let everybody know when the rally is going on. Oh, that was colorful events, those days. You don't have that any more, because of TV. Yeah, those days the candidate came, and then ask, by gosh, you can ask question 'em over there, right there, and they got to go around mingle with the crowd. And, you know. They get booed, too, if the guy wasn't supported by the crowd or.

PN: Who else did you support?

WA: Well, as I remember, I supported Hebden Porteus. I supported Francis Brown. Of course, later on, of course, I got more sophisticated and I worked very hard for Neal Blaisdell. Of course, that was much later. After the war (WWII). That one is one that's more organized I feel, that crossed all kinds of precinct line. But, I organized the citizens for Blaisdell and raised

money for 'em, among all my friends. You know, I call a group of us together.

PN: This was in Kakaako?

WA: No, no. We just crossed all boundaries.

PN: What was the, I guess, emphasis when you were helping Porteus? Was it mainly trying to get him to talk to people one-on-one, or was it more leafleting?

WA: Well, more, because he was new. You had to introduce him to the public, my precinct people. So, he had to go house-to-house so they would know who he is. Then, we follow up, of course, with the placards. But, at least he's made his canvass. Well, he spent about three of four weekends with me, going from house-to-house. And...

PN: Was there any kind of a group kind of a thing, like you know, coffee hours, they have nowadays?

WA: Nah, no. No, we don't do. We didn't do those things. We didn't have the money. That's the cheapest way and don't cost money, yeah. Only time. Oh, we used to have, like when I work for Francis Brown. I knew Francis Brown had quite a--he told me, "Okay, go have a beer bust." You know? Then, the candidate would come. Well, so I had a beer bust at the Japanese language school. I remember once we got the gang together. Oh, we had about 100 guys who show up, you know. And, I say, Francis Brown will drop in for a few minutes. Because he's going all over the place, eh. And, but then, of course, all I did was take the bill and send it to the--and get my money back. You know. Of course, those days I was already older. I was working already.

PN: Did, you know, you folks, you said the candidates promised you folks, you know...

WA: No, they don't promise anything.

PN: But they say, you know, they could get something. Did they fulfill promises?

WA: No, no. We knew that all we could ask 'em is put in the bill for us. And, I mean, after all, he's only one vote. You know. At least he can fulfill his promise to the point of introduce the bill. And, it get all mashed in with all kinds of other capital improvement program anyway. You don't expect. But, we had windfalls, I guess, with these probably park improvements took place later on and so...

PN: Did you have any personal kind of windfalls?

WA: I didn't expect any. Didn't want any.

PN: People would help candidates...

WA: Look for job and...

PN: ...look for jobs...

WA: Yeah. Not in my case. I was working. I had my own job. I didn't need job. I work because, as I say, most of it, the motivation, was my friend would come and ask me, and I'd say, "Okay, fine. He's a good man. Tell me about him." And I meet him, I talk to him. Fine. It looks all right. So, we work for 'em.

PN: What was your parents' reaction to, you know, your campaigning?

WA: They weren't concerned. They couldn't vote anyway. They weren't citizens. Okay? They had no concern because most of our parents are aliens, okay.

PN: Right. I was wondering if, you know, they tried to become citizens?

WA: No, those days they weren't able to become citizens.

PN: Oh, I see.

WA: That came much later.

PN: We heard people say there were like fights going on at the rallies, and stuff like that.

WA: Nah. Not that time. A guy get drunk. You always have that. Some guy would get drunk and pick an argument with the other two guys drunk, and they might, they got--you know. That's part of the color of Hawaiian politics, which you don't see, unfortunately, today because of TV, eh. You know, really the public really doesn't have an inkling of the candidates today as much as we used to have, because the way they campaign. Tactics have changed. Now they have fund raisers, you know, they have cocktail, pupu party and, you know, hundreds of people go there and you hardly see the candidate. You just go shake his hand, say, "Hello." You know. And, that's about all. And, if he has money, well, he would what you call it, maybe go on TV. But, even though, today, even in spite of the fact that the campaign tactics, or the fund-raising you might say, has changed, eh, the successful candidate today still does make his house-to-house call within his precinct.

But, of course my interest today transcends narrow precinct level because I'm working with the legislature as a whole now. And I have been since I work for Shell. It was really sort of, part of my job. It wasn't in the job description, was because of my long years of political, you know, experience. And, many of the candidates or the successful representatives are my contemporaries, eh. We went to school together, for example. Or if I didn't, my kid brother was his contemporary. So, in that way, you have natural affinity contact. At least I can go in and say, "I'm Wally Amioka." Or, "Come on in, you can talk to the fellow." So, I don't work for a particular candidate in that sense any more. My help right now more confine if

I can help, you know, maybe I contribute and have somebody else contribute. That kind of help.

But, it's not the same as the old days, you know. When I really, if you want to really get active, what I should do is get back to the precinct level. And go there and organize, you know, the precinct. And have the precinct workers make the canvass for the particular candidate. But then, then, you would be tied to a particular party, right. I am a card-carrying Republican. Yes. And the reason why, because I feel that the Republican Party still has some semblance of trying to maintain minimum government interference into our private lives. I think the Democratic party, at long last, is beginning to find out. Okay. That although the social legislation has been going on and pile up, regulatory, you know, especially against business. It's beginning to--reaction is taking place. I think the reaction going continue to take place unless a Democratic party begin to go back to some fundamental American, you know, ideals of individual responsibility and liberty. I think that's going to come. I think that election in New York, for instance, is not a haphazard kind of a--I think that is a, you know, sort of tells something when Bella Abzug, who is a very much liberal, has lost now three elections in a row, over there and beat by a obscure Republican now. Very obscure Republican. When you think about those things. These last couple of elections in the other states, Republicans have beat Democrats' strongholds. And, I think Carter kind of capitalize on that too, when he ran as a--even though he was a Democrat. He ran, and he's not an establishment individual. He sense the, you know, the public's, you might say, disenchantment with government, right. And, now it's only a matter of disenchantment. But, unless government curtail some of it's intrusion in what is normally, you know, private decision, even in a matter of contracts and things like that, that this is going to be, not disenchantment, it going to be opposition. Already, you hear lot of people say, "Let's withhold our taxes. Not pay the taxes." Okay.

PN: Yeah.

WA: To me, that symptomatic, you know. They opposing it, they protesting. They protesting. And, you know, I think [they're] wise, whether you're a Democrat or Republican. We all Americans, see. And the more discerning Democrats are beginning to sense this. And they trying to, I think, you know--even tax relief, okay. It's a sensing that government's taking too much from the people, eh. And that they better give some back, so that we have discretionary spending.

PN: Can we go back to Kakaako like that? How much of the voting, you think, at that time was more centered around the issues, or rather around the candidates themselves?

WA: The voting was, I would say, centered almost 100 percent around the candidates.

PN: The candidates? On their appeal to the people, or because of their...

WA: Working. Workers. Workers. I don't think issues really mattered those

days to the average voter. Even today, issues don't matter. That's the sad part about it. Frankly, that is the sad part about it. More so, with TV. More so, with TV. Look at the issues. Look at the generalities of the issues, for Christ sake. Who the hell really knows what the issues are?

PN: You saying that, you know, these people who were elected were more because of the...

WA: Organization... Right....right. Precinct organization. Grass roots organizations. Not formal organization, you know. Many times the informal group like me, I'm organizing, working for these individuals. I don't have an organization. Much of it is my own personal efforts. But then, I create some sort of an informal organization by looking at the other guy whose working for this other candidate, and I see what he can deliver. I say, "Okay, let's make a deal." You see.

PN: You talking about horse-trading kind of things?

WA: No!

PN: Who would you horse-trade with in the other districts? How would you know the other people?

WA: Oh, we would know. Of course, we know who works all the places. That my days, the time I was active, you had to know; if not the candidate would tell you who's helping him on the other side. See.

PN: Would lot of these people in the other districts be sports-related, you know? Who played barefoot football?

WA: Many times, certainly. Surely. For instance, in Pawaa group or sport-related, I knew the Kurano brothers because we played sports. Even if we played against them. We knew them. They knew you. So, you can talk to 'em. And that's where it kind of mushrooms out, eh. We would identify, or the candidate himself would identify, say, "Eh, this fella, you know, has a lot of "pull" in this district. Oh, fine." And, he would be looking for the same thing. Don't forget, you only represent one precinct. All right. To get elected in the district, you need several precincts like this. You got to carry, all right, the majority of the precincts. All he have to do, carry by one vote all the precincts, eh. Oh, yeah.

PN: People who supported, let's say, parties at that time, you know, from Kakaako, you were with the Atkinson team. How much other people, you know, who supported parties were from the Atkinson team also?

WA: Well, you would expect all of them to support you. Okay. But, they may have been working for somebody else. That's where the horse-trading comes in. But, lot of them are not active, see. They would vote only. Say, "Okay, are you his supporter?" Really, most of the people don't know their candidates. Really don't know. They know the friends of the candidate. Right?

PN: That's why they vote? (laughs)

WA: You yourself, ask yourself, even today, how would you vote? Do you really know the candidates?

PN: No.

WA: Yeah? But, if your friend comes and says, "Eh, I know this fella. How about kokua." And you look, eh, you have two. Maybe in your representative you have two or three to vote for. "Oh, sure. I don't mind giving you." Right? That's the way voting goes. This is---you don't have that too much todays, see. But, if you really want to carry the guy, a good candidate, a really hard-working candidate, that's what you would do. He would identify somebody in every precinct who's willing to work for him.

PN: Why do you think Kakaako was such a heavy Democrat district?

WA: That's a natural thing with the kind of people we had. The Democrats have always been traditionally, say, "We, the people's party." Okay. Republican, rightly or wrong, has always been identified with the "haves." Okay. Even now. Although they are the "have nots" in politics right now. You vote nationally, even in Hawaii. See? You know, that stigma you might say, still sticks. And then, of course, the Democrats still exploit that, see.

PN: Why did you back a Republican candidate? Let me ask you a question. Were you a "have not?" Or, whatever you want to call it.

WA: Oh, I don't know. I don't think I had. I was pretty poor family. We had to struggle like heck.

PN: Yeah.

WA: But, it's just, maybe a matter of, as I say, it started out primarily because I began knowing some of those people who was supporting, you know. And they came to see me. Whereas, if the Democrat probably had done that thing, I probably would have supported him if the guy was a attractive, you know. If I felt that the fella was somebody that close to my own political principles. See? Frankly speaking, I'm a very reactionary individual in this modern age, you might say, because I don't believe in all this handouts. I don't believe in big government. I think it's wrong, because that I deplore, and I think the Democratic party is a, you know, government party. More big government for everything. More social programs, and so forth.

PN: Would you say your views now, are the same as when you first started?

WA: Oh, yeah. I think so. Pretty much so. Pretty much so.

PN: You said you belonged to a, you know changing the subject, but you belonged to a Hi-Y club?

WA: I belonged to a Hi-Y club. It's a natural transition. We go from Pioneer

to Hi-Y, while you in high school, you know. That's part of the, you might say, the natural type of social activities we had in our day. I don't know what it is today. And then, of course, after I went to work, they had a Y-men's club. And, I used to advise a Y-men's club for a year or two before the war came. But, those were, I think, part of it was because Y had a gym. They had a swimming pool and they had organized programs for you know, all the district, and so forth. So, I belonged to a Y club. You know, that's a natural affiliation.

PN: Were there many Hi-Y clubs when you were going to school?

WA: Oh, yeah, I think so. I don't know how many. But, we meet on different nights, you know. You meet different nights to use the facility. You can't all meet, you know, but then you'd have a--they would sponsor, they used to sponsor Saturday evening dance, for instance. And, at the gym, Nuuanu Y gym. Oh, there's quite a several hundred, so you know, you assume that there's quite a few Hi-Y clubs, eh.

PN: Do you remember, you know, if you folks had a club name, or anything like that?

WA: I don't remember that actually. Most of it, I think, we went under Atkinson if anything else.

PN: So the purpose was mainly what? Social gathering?

WA: Oh, yeah. Social and we'd have a project usually, I guess. You know like most Hi-Y, or any kind of a youth club. There might be a project for a maybe, gathering Christmas basket, or something like that. You know, usual kind of thing.

PN: We talked to you about recreation about yourself like that. I was wondering what did your parents do as far as, you know, recreation?

WA: I don't think they had too much recreation other than maybe going to shows, you know. Movies. No TV those days. Or they would listen to the radio, naturally. But, they go to the temple, most of the thing. Their thing would be centered around the temple activities. You know, like the Buddhist temple would have, you know, several times a year something going on. Or, my father, when he would come in and he's a fisherman, so whenever there's sumo during New Year's at the, you know, the Izumo Shrine, why, he's used to go that. He was a wrestler himself. So, it's very limited, you know. I think our parents didn't have the kind of recreational activities as you envision now with the senior citizens, eh. In fact, my mother, and when she became a senior citizen, had more activity. You know, she goes to the Makule Club and the church would have a, you know, Makule Club, and that kind of thing.

PN: When other nationalities had their cultural events, you know. Would you attend any of 'em in Kakaako? Like say, for instance the Portuguese, you know, Holy Ghost Festival.

WA: I think, you would find them coming to see the movies and things like that. Fund raisers. Yeah, they would come.

PN: What about you attending any of their, you know, like the Portuguese...

WA: Well, I, no. I don't recall.

PN: You don't recall?

WA: No, I only saw going to the Holy Ghost Parade that they used to have, you know. That I would just go for spectator. I remember recalling those things, but...

END OF SIDE ONE.

REMEMBERING KAKA'AKO: 1910–1950

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